

The power of praier.

A
SERMON PREACHED
in the Cathedrall Church of
Exeter in Augst. 1596.

By
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Diuinitie for the Ladie Margaret
in Cambridge.



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*And are to be sold in Pauls Churchyard at the signe
of the Crowne by Simon Waterston.*

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To the Queenes most
excellent Maiestie.



*Religion, dread and
deare Soueraigne, is
an vnmoueable foun-
dation of highest au-
thoritie and honour.
O then howe blessed
are all we? how sure*

*and vnmoueable is our peace and ioy?
God hauing blessed vs with a king, who in
religion and learning excelleth all a line,
and his Maiestie with a Queene in
due proportion answerable to himselfe.
Wherefore as it is our dutie to ioyne both
in our daily prayers: so neither would I
separate you in my humble endeauours.
For the present felicitie and glory of this
realme resteth wholly in his Maiestie.*

*Gloriosa in
dum pias
honoribus re-
gius immobile
est fundamentum. Cyrillus
ad Theodof.
de recta fide.*

751
but the future hope to haue these infinite
blessings continued vpon vs and all our
posteritie, euen vnto the worlds end, ari-
seith from you both, in respect of that
most happie royall issue you haue had al-
readie, and which if it please God you
may haue hereafter. Which as it will be
our greatest securitie and comfort: so that
it may be no danger to your Maiesties
health, especially that which your High-
nesse now goeth withall, we shall continu-
ally and importunately pray and beseech
at Gods hands. And what the power
of praier is, this short sermō which I pre-
sume to offer vnto your sacred Maiestie,
doeth in some sort shewe.

Your Maiesties most deuoted
and obedient subiect,

Thomas Playfere.



THE POWER of prayer.

THE TEXT.

*Aske, and it shall be given you : seeke,
and you shall finde : knocke, and it shal
be opened vnto you.*

Matth. 7. 7.



Efore I come to
the particuler in-
treatie of this text,
it will not be a-
misse, as I take it,
generally to ob-
serue some fewe

things. Our Sauour, saies not here, as
to one, Aske thou, seeke thou, knocke

A I thou :



thou: but as to many, *Aske, seeke, knocke*. For it is, *Our Father*; though it be, *I belcene*. A sparke of fire in the fire, keepes fire; by it selfe, of it selfe goes out. A droppe of water in the sea, is safe; beeing alone, is soone dried vp. Euen so, in priuate praier, that small sparke of zeale which is in vs, may quickly be put out, and that little droppe of deuotion which is in vs may quickly be dried vp: but in publique praier, it is not so. Whereupon Daniel ^a requesteth his companions, Sidrach, Misach, and Abednago, to pray with him. Yea, Ioel ^b aduiseeth them, to gather a solemne assemblie, and to call the elders, and all the inhabitants of the land, into the house of the Lord, to offer vp prayers vnto God. A threefold cord, is not easily broken^c. Now what is praier els, but a cord, wherewith we binde Gods hands, when he is readie to smite vs for our sinnes? Euen as Esay complaining to god, saies, ^d There is none that

a 2. 17.

b 1. 14.

c Eccles. 4. 12.

d 64. 7.

of praier.

3

that calleth vpon thy name, none that riseth vp to take hold of thee, to hold thy hands, and binde them fast with the cord of praier. But if a twofold cord, or a threefold cord, cannot easily be broken, whenas two or three of Daniels companions are gathered together in the name of Christ: then much more a hundred-fold cord, or a thousand-fold cord, cannot easily be broken, whenas not onely two or three of vs, haue agreed vpon a petition in earth, but euen Iuels solemne assembly, such a solemne assembly as here is, many hundreds, yea many thousands of the faithfull, are gathered together in the house of the lord, to offer vp praier vnto God. Such a strong cord of praier, as this is, so well twisted by so many, must needs most forcibly draw downe from heauen, infinit graces for vs. And therefore our Sauour saies here, not as to one, but as to many, *Aske, seeke, knocke*. So likewise it is not saide here, as in the

A 2

time

e Ut accendatur desideria.
 Martial. Epist.
 ad Tolos.

f Quo à nobis
 avidius desideratur, eo de
 nobis suavius
 latatur.

time present, that by and by we obtaine the thing we pray for; but as in the time to come, *And it shall be given you, and you shall find, and it shall be opened unto you.* For as Laban kept Iacob a long while from his yongest daughter, whome he loued best, that his loue might be more increased continually: so God oftentimes holdeth vs a while in suspence, that he may the more sharpen our appetite, and inflame our ^c desire. Because, saies Gregorie, The more earnestly he is desired of vs, the more sweetely he is delighted in ^f vs. Wherefore, as a merchant, beeing about to put money into a bagge, and perceiuing the bagge will scarce hold all the money, first stretches out the bagge, before he put in the money: after the same sort, in this case, dealeth God with vs. God knowing that those blessings, wherewith vpon our praiers he purposes to enrich vs, are so great, that our hearts as yet are not capable of them, staies a while, till afterward when our hearts

of praier.

2

are more enlarged, and stretched out like a wide bagge, we may the receiue them, when we are fitter for them.

Whereupon the princely prophet saies, Lord, I crie vnto thee in the day time, and thou hearest not, also in the night time, and yet this is not to be thought follie in & me. Some perhaps would thinke it a great point of folly, for a man to call and crie vnto him, who stoppes his eares, and seemes not to heare. Neuertheles, this follie of the faithfull, is wiser then all the wisdom of the world. For we know well enough, that howsoever God seem at the first not to heare, yet, The Lord is a sure refuge, *in due time, in* ^h *affliction*. First, *in due time*: then *in affliction*. Because, for the most part, in helping vs, God rather respects the due time, then the affliction. So that although, as soone as we pray, he doe not alway presently free vs from affliction, yet if we can be content to wait a while, and tarie the Lords leisure, in

g Psal. 121.
Ker in die
m iust. Sep-
tuagint.

h Psal. 99.

A 3

his

his due time, he will surely relecue vs. And therefore it is said here, not as in the time present, but as in the time to come, *And it shall be giuen you, and you shall finde, and it shall be opened vnto you.*

Now then in this whole sentence, two principle parts would be considered. The first, what we in our prayer must performe to god. The second what God for our prayer will performe to vs. What we in our praier must performe to God, is in these wordes, *Aske, seeke, knock.* *Aske* with the mouth, *seeke* with the heart, *knock* with the hand. What God for our praier will performe to vs, is in these wordes, *And it shalbe giuen you, and you shall find, and it shalbe opened vnto you. And it shall be giuen you,* that's for temporall things: *and you shall find,* that's for spirituall things: *and it shalbe opened vnto you,* that's for eternall things. *Aske, seek, knock, and it shalbe giuen you,*

of praier.

Y

you, and you shall find, and it shall be opened vnto you. First we must aske with the mouth. Ioakim the virgin Maries father, going to the wildernes to pray, said thus, *Prayer shalbe my meate and i drink*. Whereby it is euident, that as meate and drink, the naturall food of the bodie, must go in at the mouth: so on the other side, prayer, the spirituall food of the soule, must go out of the mouth. Which is the reason, why Pythagoras willed his schollers to pray aloud ^k. Not that he thought that God could not otherwise heare, but to teach vs, as Clemens noteth^l, that as our dealing with men must be as in the sight of God: so our prayer to God, must be as in the hearing of men. Ezechias king of the Iewes, witnesseth of himselfe, that praying in his sicknes, he chattered like a young swallowe ^m. Nowe we knowe by that prouerb, which forbiddeth to keepe swallows vnder the same roofe ⁿ where we keepe our selues, that no

ἵ Εἶπα μοι ἰν-
χὴ βρῶμα, καὶ
πῶμα.

κ Μετὰ φωνῆς
ἐυχισθῆαι.

l Stro. l. 4.

m Esa. 38. 14.

n ὁμοῖος οἶκος.

A 4

bird

u 62.6.

p Num. 22. 4.

q Ose. 14. 2.

c Cant. 4. 16.

bird is so troublesome for chattering, as the swallow is. His meaning then was this: that as a yong swallow openeth her mouth, and neuer leaues yawning vnto the damme, till shee she be satisfied: so he opened his mouth, and as the Prophet Esay saies °, kept no silence, neuer left *asking*, gaue the lord no rest, vntil he had mercy vpon him. Balack, king of the Moabites, speaketh thus p, Shall this multitude licke vp all that are round about vs, as a calfe licketh vp the grasse of the field? Nowe we knowe that a calfe licketh vp the grasse of the fiede with his mouth. The thing then which he feared, was this: least the Israelites should licke vp, that is, ouercome and destroy him, and all his, with the *asking* of their mouthes, with their praers to God, which are called q the calues of the lipps, euen as a calfe licketh vp the grasse of the field. The Church wisheth the southerne winde would blow, that her spices might flowe forth r.

The

of praier.

The southerne winde, is the milde & comfortable spirit of God. The spices, are the praier, the sweete odours of the Saints . So that we wish the southerne winde would blowe vpon vs that our spices might flowe forth, when as we wish the holy Ghost would worke vpon vs, that our praier might flowe forth. That as God breatheth in his spirit into vs, by the inspiration of grace : so we might breath out our spirit vnto God, by the respiration of praier. According to that of the prophet, *I opened my mouth and drewe in breath. I drewe in breath, ther's inspiration . I opened my mouth, ther's respiration* So that they which neuer open their mouthes to aske, are dumbe fishes , which haue liues, and breath not; or else dead idols, which haue mouths, and speake not. Whereas in trueth, every one that hath an eare to heare, ought to heare ; and so every one that hath a mouth to speake , ought to speake. Speake vnto

(Psalm. 119. 131.)

Edum. 30. 8.

u Can. 8. 13.

vnto the rocke, saies God to Moses ^t,
 when the children of Israel wanted
 water in the wildernesse. And after
 the same manner, when we want the
 water of comfort, in the wildernesse
 of this world, we must *aske* it of God,
 we must speake for it vnto the rocke
 Christ Iesus. For it was his onely re-
 quest he made to his spouse; when
 he tooke his very last farewell of
 her vpon earth, Let me heare thy
 voice ^u. As if Christ should say thus
 to his Church, My dearest, now I am
 readie to ascend vp vnto my father.
 Howbeit, in the meane while, I will
 not leaue you comfortlesse. But
 though I shall be absent from you in
 bodie, yet I will be present with you
 in spirit; alwaies beholding your or-
 der of seruice, and hearing your prai-
 er vnto me. Therefore, let vs not here-
 after be strange to one another, but
 let tokens of louing kindnesse passe
 continually betwixt vs. I will send
 downe to you my spirit, like tongues
 of

of praier.

II

of fire. Send you vp to me your praier, like pillars of smoake. And in case you want any thing at any time, doe no more, but let me heare your voice; let me by a praier, as by a letter from you vnderstand it, and you shall haue it. *Aske*, and it shall be giuen you.

Yet it is not enough for vs, to aske with the mouth: we must also *seeke* with the heart. For seeking with the heart, hath oftentimes preuailed, without the asking of the mouth. But asking with the mouth, could neuer yet obtaine any thing of God, without the seeking of the heart. Therefore Hierom findeth himselfe greatly grieved, that now and then in praier time, his mouth & his mind went not both together. My minde, saies he, ^x is wandring or walking in this or that gallery: or else telling or counting this or that summe of monie: or diuers other waies misled and seduced. This is satans subtilty, to be then most busie

x Aut per porticus deambulo, aut de fano cogito in dialog. aduersus Luciferum. I pio in tempore quo eleuare mentem paramus insertis manibus cogitationibus ad terrena plerumque delinimur. Ambr. de Fuga scuti. c. i. citante August. contra Iul. 1.2.

busie in tempting of vs, when we are most busie in praying to God. As when two goe to law with one another, the plaintife will doe what he can, to hinder the defendant, that the iudge may not heare what he is able to say in his own cause: in like sort the deuill, the common plaintife, the common accuser of all mankind, when he seeth vs vpon our knees, pleading for our selues by prayer, and *seeking* fauour and pittie of God, the iudge of all, then doth he most interrupt and disturbe vs. And euen as the furies, are described to haue snakes and serpents vpon their heades, in stead of haire: so sathan distracts our mindes, and makes vs like furies, putting pestilent and noysome cogitations into our heades, in stead of deuout and holy affections. Which is the cause why Iob, 7 before he fell downe vpon the ground to pray, did shau his head, did shau and cut off all idle and earthly thoughts, which are nothing els,

of praier.

els, but snakes and serpents, suggested by that old serpent the deuill. For blessed Iob knew right well, it was vnpossible God should heare him, if he heard not himselfe. No no, saies God, I will neuer heare such a people, because this people drawes neare to me with their mouthes, & honour me with their lippes, but their hearts are farre from ^a me. What then saies the Apostle? I will pray with my breath, or with my mouth: yea and I wil pray also with my vnderstanding, or with my ^a heart. Seeing indeede five wordes, though they were no more, comming from a well disposed and a faithfull heart, are a thousand times better, the ten thousand words, which are neuer at all vitered, but muttered onely and mumbled vp in the mouth. Gods promise to his people is this, You ^b shall *seeke* me, and you shall finde me, because you shall seeke me with your whole heart. Gods performance of his promise is this,

^a Elsa. 39. 12.

^a 1. Cor. 14. 35.

^b Deut. 4. 29.

e Ierem. 39. 13.

d Medullatum
sacrificium.
Psal. 66. 15.

e 4. Psal.

f Inueni cor
meum.
1. Sam. 7. 27.

g Ecclesiasti-
cus 18. 22.

this, e You haue sought me, and you haue found me, because you haue sought me with your whole heart. Therefore when thou seekest, *seeke* with thy heart; when thou praieſt enter into thy chamber. Thy lippes are but the chamber dore. So that, when thou haſt opened the dore of thy lips, then thou muſt enter into the very chamber of thine heart. That thy praier may not be an emptie or a windie praier, puſt or blowne from the lungs, or from the lippes: but a heartie and a pithie praier, a ſacrifice which hath marrow and d^e fatnes. Such a ſacrifice as Dauid offered, whenas hauing firſt ſaid, *My heart hath failed* e me, I haue loſt my heart: anon after he ſaies, *I haue now*, O Lord, *found my heart* again to pray vnto thee. Salomon deckt & garniſhed his temple, before he praied in it: and ſo before thou praieſt, prepare thy e heart. Be ſure thou finde and furniſh thy heart, which is the true temple of him.

of praier.

him, who is greater then Salomon.
And as that woman that sought her
groat, swept ouer all the whole house;
so whē thou *seekest* any thing of God,
sweepe ouer the whole house of thy
h heart: say with Manasses, O Lord, I
bow vnto thee, the knees of my heart:
seeing thou hast saide, Seeke ye my
face, thy face, O Lord, doe I *seeke*: yea
I doe seeke thee with my whole heart:
seeing thou hast saide, *Seeke*, and you
shall finde.

h Psal. 138.

Yet it is not enough for vs to seeke
with the heart: we must also *knocke*
with the hand. For he that was borne
blinde, could notwithstanding both
see and say, that God heareth not sin-
ners; but that euery one which calleth
vpon the name of the Lord, must de-
part from iniquitie. So that it is to li-
tle purpose, for a man to seek, though
with neuer so faithfull a heart, except
also he *knocke* with a righteous hand
The heretikes called *Euchita*, profes-
sed

sed to doe nothing els but pray . Be-
 cause the Apostle exhorteth vs to
 pray continually . But they did not
 consider , that to pray alwaies, is to
 serue God alwaies . And that a godly
 life *knocks* aloude, and is a perpetuall
 praiser to God . So that professing to
 pray, and to doe nothing else, in effect
 they did nothing lesse. Seeing as The-
 odoret reporteth of them, They did^h
 nothing for the most part , but sleep.
 Whereas in Basils iudgement, a prai-
 er should be filled, not with syllables,
 or good words, so much, as with good
 workes. Which none can doe , who
 either with these heretickes, doe no-
 thing at all , or else no good thing at
 all, but onely that which is ill with o-
 thers. When you shall multiply your
 prayers vnto me, saies God ^k, I wil not
 heare you, because your hāds are full
 of blood. If a subiect should offer vp
 a supplication , hauing his hands im-
 brued in the blood of the kings
 sonne , tell me, I pray you , what
 thinke

h Kaθισιδ υμ
 εις προσευχη.

i Ου συλλα-
 βας, αλλα
 εργα.

k Esai. 15.

of praier.

thinke you? how would the king take it? would he grant him his request, trow you? or rather would he not be most wrathfully incensed, and enraged against him? And euen so doth God take it at our handes when we *knock* with bloody & vncleane hands, presuming still to pray, and yet continually crucifying the sonne of God by our sinnes. Therefore say the godly, Let vs lift vp our hearts with our handes¹. They say not, Let vs lift vp our hearts alone: but let vs lift vp our hearts with our hands. Let vs not onely seeke with our hearts, but also *knock* with our hands: yea euen with innocent hands. And another: ^m Let my prayer be directed vnto thee as incense: & let the lifting vp of my hāds, be an euening sacrifice vnto thee. And yet another: I will that men pray euery where; lifting vp pure handes ⁿ. For as the precious stone *diacletes*, though it haue very many excellent soueraignties in it, yet it looseth the al,

1 Lam. 3. 41.

m Psal 141. 2.

n 2. Tim. 2. 8.

B I

if

if it be put in a dead mans mouth : so prayer, which is the only pearle and iewell of a Christian, though it haue very many rare vertues in it, yet it looseth them euery one, if it be put into a mans mouth, or into a mans heart either, that is dead in sinne, and doth not *knock* with a pure hand. Hence it is, that the Church is said to be perfumed with frankinsence and myrr. ° By frankinsence is ment, a burning seruencie of affectiō, when-as an enslaved heart seeketh. By myrr is ment, mortification and dying vnto sinne, when as an vndefiled hand *knocketh*. As when the Church saies, *p* My hands drop downe myrr, and my fingers pure myrr, vpon the handles of the barre. This is that holy perfume of the tabernacle, which god appoynted to be made of *pure myrr and frankinsence, of each like waight*. 9 Note that, *Of each like waight*. But we for the most part, marr it in the making. For we put into this perfume of prayer,

o Cant. 3.6.

p Cant. 3.3.

9 Exod. 30.34.

of praier.

er whole pounds of frankinsence, but not a dram, nay scarce so much as one graine of mirr. We put into it much frākinsence, much pretence of faith, much shew of seeking with the heart; but little myrr, litle true mortification, little holines of life, little sound *knocking* with the hand. Nay, that which is most lamentable, or rather most detestable of all, some are not ashamed, in stead of this pure myrrhe, to put in the very drugges, and the dregges of their vile sinnes. Which is the cause why many a mans praier, is so lothsome, and so odious to God. Whereas if we would make this perfume, as it should be made, according to Gods prescription, and put in as much of the myrrhe, as of the frankinsence, *of each like waight*, then I assure you, no pomander which is made of amber and muske, would be so pleasant in the nostrils of God, as this perfume of praier, where with the Church is perfumed, which

Exod. 17. 9.

1 Sam. 5. 17.

is made of frankincense and myrrhe. Of frankincense, in a heart that seeketh; and myrrhe, in a hand that *knocketh*. When Moses praied in mount Oreb, his hands were holden vp by Vr and Aaron. Ye they did not onely hold vp his hands, but also they held his rod in his hands. Now the rodde of Moses was a figure of the crosse of Christ. Whereby we are taught, that we must not *knocke* with our owne hands, but with Moses rod in our hands, not trusting to be heard for the works of our owne hands, for our own merits, but for Christs mercies. For this rodde of Moses is the crosse of Christ, the key of Dauid, the key wherewith Elias *knocks*; or rather indeede he stood not without, knocking like a stranger, but with this key of praier, he lockt and vnlockt heauen at his pleasure. Among them that haue beene borne of women, there hath not risen vp a greater then Iohn Baptist. Not a greater.

True.

of praier.

II

True. Onely the first Iohn Baptist Elias was as great, as the second Elias Iohn Baptist. For both of them came in one and the selfe same spirit, in one and the selfe same power. No maruell then though Elias, beeing such a holy man, one while by turning the key one way, did locke vp the whole heauen, another while by turning the same key of praier as much another way, in the turning of a hand, did vnlocke all the doores and windowes of heauen, and set them wide open. Why doe ye maruell at this? Euen we, we our selues, I say, shall be able to doe as much as euer Elias did, if we come in the spirit and power of Elias, as Iohn Baptist did. If we haue such a spirit in our heart to seeke, and such a power in our hand to *knocke*, it shall likewise be opened vnto vs. For Christ hath saide here, *Knocke*, and it shall be opened vnto you. Thus much for the first part, what we in our praier must performe to God, in these

B 3 words,

words, *Aske, seeke, knocke.*

The second part followeth, what God for our prayer will performe to vs, *And it shall be giuen you.* That's for temporall things. In another place it is said, *Giue, and it shall be giuen you.* Here, *Aske, and it shall be giuen you.* So that it is all one with God. We may get as much of him by asking, as by giuing. By asking that which we haue not, as by giuing that which we haue. Yet S. James saies, "You aske, and it is not *giuen* you. But the reason follows, Because you aske amisse. Because you aske not with your mouth. For you aske temporall things, to consume them vpon your lusts. Now though this be the ende which thou intendest, yet thou dardest not confesse so much with thy mouth. Therefore then perhaps, thou maist aske and misse, whenas thou dost aske amisse. Whenas, saies Barnard, "either thou dost aske from the writē word,

14.3.

u Aut prater
verum petis,
ut propter
verum non
petis.

OR

of praier.

H

or els thou dost not aske for the begotten word. Seeing every thing which we aske, as it must be assured and warranted to vs by the Scripture, which is the written word; so it must be count'nanced and commended to God by Christ, which is the begotten word. Now both these wordes, written and begotten, presuppose a mouth. Which if they be in thy mouth, then Gods promise is plaine, Open thy mouth, and I will fill it. Aske of me, and I will *give* thee, the heathen for thine inheritance. For the eyes of the Lord, are vpon the righteous, and his eares are in their ^x praier. He saies not, their praier is in his eares, but, his eares are in their praier. To signifie, that though our praier be so weake, that they cannot pierce through the cloudes, & much lesse enter into the eares of the Lord of Hostes, yet that he will bowe downe, and incline his eares vnto our praier. So that though our praier

x Aures eius
in precibus e-
orum. Pl. 34. 16.

y Iosua. 10. 14.

cannot be in his eares, yet his eares shall be in our praiers. A capitaine of the host of Israel beeing cut off by the time, before he could cut off all his enemies, spake to the sunne, saying, *Sunne, stand thou still.* This was a temporall thing, euen time it selfe which he praied for. But there was neuer scene such a daie, neither before nor since, wherein the Lord obeyed the voice of a man. His praiers were not in the eares of the Lord. They went vp to the sunne, and no further. Yet the eares of the Lord, were in his praiers. For the scripture saies not, that the sunne obeyed, but that the Lord obeyed the voice of a man. To signifie, that not onely God, himselfe, will yeeld vnto vs, but also if the sunne, or any other of his creatures, should refuse to giue vs our asking, yet that he will command and compell them also, with himselfe to serue vs. And what man then will not obey the voice of the Lord, seeing the Lord

of praier.

Lord will obey the voice of a man ?
Pharaoh, beeing plagued with frogs,
got the man of God to pray for him.

*And the Lord did according to the
word of Moses* ². And the Lord obey-
ed the voice of a man. Moses did ac-
cording to the word of the Lord.
That's plaine. The Lord did accor-
ding to the word of Moses. That's
straunge. Yet thus it is. And this it
shewes; that if Moses will doe accor-
ding to the word of the lord, the lord
will doe according to the word of
Moses. If we will keepe his precepts,
he will fulfill our praier. He will ful-
fill the desire of them that feare him,
he also will heare their crie, and will
help them. I haue cried, saies the Psal-
mist, because thou hast heard me ^a.
One would thinke he should haue
said contrariwise, Thou hast heard
me, because I haue cried. Yet he saies,
I haue cried, because thou hast heard
me. To shewe, that crying, doeth not
alwaies goe before hearing, with god,

x Exod. 8. 13.

a Psal. 137. 6.

as it doeth with vs: but that God will not only heare our crie, but also heare vs before we crie, and will helpe vs. And that which is most admirable of all, though it were a thing which once he purposed neuer to *giue* vs, yet if we aske it, he will reuerse and repeale his owne sentence to pleasure vs. God once repented him, that he had made man, & said, I wil destroy man whom I haue made, from the face of the earth. Yet when Noah had built an altar and praied to God ^b, The lord smelleth a sauour of rest, and said in his heart, I will not henceforth curse the earth any more for mans cause. God once was so displeased with his people, that he said flatly, ^c I tell you truely, I will deliuer you no more. Yet when when they asked a deliuerer of him, his very soule was grieved within him, for the miserie of Israel, and he *gave* them Iepthe to deliuer them from their enemies ^d. God once sent Nathan with this message

^a Gen. 3. 12.

^b Non add m
dtra, vt lice-
rem vos.

^d Iudg. 10. 16.

of praier.

III

sage to Dauid, As the Lord liueth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. Yet when Dauid had ask't forgiuenesse, and said, Haue mercie vpon me O lord, alter thy great goodnesse, and according to the multitude of thy mercies, doe away mine offences; God sent the same prophet with a contrarie message, The lord hath taken away thy sinne, and thou shalt not die. God once sent Esay with this message to Ezechias, Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not liue. Yet when Ezechias had turned him toward the wall, and wept, and praied, and said, O Lord remember howe I haue walked before thee in trueth, and with a perfect heart; God sent the same prophet with a contrarie message, ^e Thus saith the lord, I haue heard thy praiers and thy teares, and now behold thou shalt liue and not die. Then did the king reioyce in thy strength O lord, exceeding glad was he of thy saluation. For thou

e 2. Sam 12. 13.

f 2. Reg. 10. 6.

thou didst graunt him his owne desire, and didst not denie him the request of his lips. He asked life of thee, and thou gauest him a longer life, euen fiftene yeares longer. As also here thou doest promise vs, both for this life, and for all temporall things cōcerning this life, yea though it be a thing, which once thou hadst purposed neuer to giue vs, Aske, *and it shall be giuen you.*

Yea not only God will giue you temporall things, but also *you shall find* spiritual things. Yet the Church saies, ⁱ I sought him whome my soule loued, I sought him, and I found him not. But the reason goes before, because she sought him in her bed: she sought him not with her heart. My soule loveth him, saies she, yet at that time her heart loued her bed better. Therefore sayes Augustine, ^h Seek what you seeke, but seeke not where you seeke. Seek Christ: that's a good what. Seek what

g Cant. 3.4.

q Querite
quod queritis,
sed non vbi
queritis.

of praier.

what you seeke . But seeke him not in bed. That's an ill where . But seeke not where you seeke . Moses found Christ , not in a soft bed , but in a bramble bush . So that the bed is no fit place to *find* him in , who had not where to rest himselfe . But goe into the garden among the bramble bushes , and there you shall find him , not sleeping , but sweating dropps of blood for your redemption , and calling you to him , ¹ Come vnto me all you that labour , (not you that lie a bed and are secure , but you that labour) and are heauie laden , and I will refresh you . Take my yoke vpō you , and you shall *find* rest for your soules . If you seeke rest with you hearts , with your soules , you shall find rest for your soules ; & that rest also , which is not to be found in the bedde of pleasure , but in the yoke of Christ . If thou seekest for this spirituall rest , as for siluer , and search for it , as for treasures , ^k then shalt thou vnderstand the feare of the Lord , and *find* the

1 Math. 11. 29.

k Pro. 23.

1 Esay 55.6.

on Esay 65.1.

a Math. 8.8.

knowledge of God. Therefore seek the Lord, not in the bed of sensuality, but where he may be found. And seek the lord while he may be found^l. Or rather indeed, though not in what place soeuer, yet at what time so euer we sinners seeke, we shall be sure to *finde* him, that saies, I am found of them that sought me^m not. So that no man, seeking God, shall returne with a *Non est inuentus*; but we that haue erred & strayed like lost sheepe, shall finde him, or rather we shall be found of him, before we seeke him. And that which is most wonderfull of all, we shall not onely *finde* often-times before we seeke, but also we shall finde much more then we seeke. That good Centurionⁿ sought onely one word, *Dic verbum*. saies he, but he found more. Christ vttered not onely one word, whereby his seruant was healed, but also very many words, wherein he gaue himselfe a most singular praise and commendation for his

of praier.

his faith. Dymas, the theife on the right hand, ° sought onely to be remembred, when Christ should come into his kingdom, but he *found* more.

o Luk. 23. 42.

What talkest thou of beeing remembred, saies Christ, as though thou shouldst be farre from me out of my sight? Tush man, I will doe more for thee then so? Thou shalt not onely be remembred, but thou shalt be with me. And why saist thou, Whē I come into my kingdome? as though it would be a long while first? This very day shalt thou be with me in my kingdome; *this day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* That needie man in the

Gospel, P sought onely to borrow three loaves, but he *found* more. God his good friend, bad him welcome at midnight, and did not onely lende him, but frankly and freely giue him, not onely three loaves, but as many as he needed, *He gaue him as many as he needed.*

p Luk. 11. 9.

Salomon, ° sought onely wisdom, but he *found* more. Seeing he sought

92 Chron. 1. 10.

sought first the kingdome of God & the righteousnes thereof, all other things besides, were added vnto him. Wherefore if any man want wisdom, or any such spirituall thing, let him with Salomon seeke it of God, & he shall *finde* it. Yea we shall finde infinitely aboue measure, more then we seeke, or can deuise to seeke, of him that saies, *Seeke, and you shall finde.*

Luk. 11. 9.

Yea not only you shall find spirituall things, but also *it shall be opened vnto you*: that's for eternal things. Yet we read that some began to knock, saying, *Lord, Lord, open vnto vs,* and it was not *opened* vnto them. But the reason is euident elsewhere. Because they did not knock with their hands. They had, I grant lampes in their hands, but they had not oyle in their laps. So that all their knocking, was but as a sounding brasse, or as a tinckling cimball. Whereas if we would knocke to purpose indeede, the

of praier.



the way were, as Christ teacheth vs
 elfwhere, not to crie Lord, Lord, but
 by setting to our hands, to doe and
 worke the will of our heavenly fa-
 ther. Loe ye, saies Chrysologus, how
 loath our good Lord is to denie vs a-
 ny thing, seeing though he were ne-
 uer so much disposed to keepe vs out,
 yet here he teacheth vs a way, how
 we may breake open the dores, and
 presse in vpon him, and get the king-
 dome of heauen whether he will or
 no, by the violence and force of faith,
 from him. For ther's a great diffe-
 rence betweene Diues and God,
 though there be a great agreement
 betweene Lazarus and vs. Lazarus
 was a beggar full of sores: so are we
 all by nature beggars, standing with-
 out, and knocking at the dore. Yea,
 his bodie was not so full of sores, as
 our soule is of sinnes. Lazarus desired
 to be relieued with the crummes of
 bread, which fell from the rich mans
 board: so haue we all neede, God

En quàm ne-
 gare nolle,
 qui sibi etiam
 neganti, quali-
 ter extorque-
 retur, ostendit.

Luc. 16. 30.

wote, to be refreshed with the crums
of mercie, which fall from our ma-
sters table. Yet in one respect, we are
better then Lazarus, In that it was his
hard happe, to knocke at the dore of
a cruell, a wretched, a miserable cai-
tiffe, who could see no time to *open*
vnto him. But we knocke at the dore
of a most kind, a most liberall, a most
mercifull father, who as soone as he
heareth vs rapping with a lively faith,
which worketh by charitie, hath no
power to keepe vs out any longer,
but presently he *openeth* vnto vs. And
euen as S. Peter, " when he saw that
lame cripple lying vpon the ground,
crauing an almes, at the beautifull
gate of the temple, said vnto him, Sil-
uer and gold haue I none, but such as
I haue, health, and recouerie I giue
thee: so Christ, when he seeth vs ly-
ing prostrate, groueling on the ground
before him, and knocking for an
almes at the beautifull gate of his ho-
ly temple, by and by *openeth* vnto
vs,

of praier.

vs, and giues vs not siluer or gold, or any such corruptible thing, but health and saluation to our soules, and all the inestimable riches of his glorie, and all the eternall treasures of his kingdome. O that some of you would a litle trie, whether this be true which I say or no! that you would bounce as hard as euer you can, at this beautifull gate, and say with the Psalmist, * Arise, arise, O Lord, why sleepest thou? I warrant you, you should heare him answer you in another Psalm, y Now for the pitifull cōplaint of the poore, I will arise, saith the Lord; I will sleepe no longer, I will arise and open vnto them. So it was opened to the poore & Publican. He went vp to the temple to pray, and when he came thither, he knocked his breast and said, Lord, be mercifull vnto me a sinner. Therefore the dore of mercie was opened vnto him, and he went home, euen into heauen his long home, more iustified in the sight of God,

x Psal. 44. 23.

y Psal. 135.

x Luk. 18. 13.

a Act. 7. 56.

b Psal. 118. 19.

c Act. 16. 25.

then that other which iustified himselfe. So was it *opened* to S. Steuen ^a. He was brought out to be stoned. But when he came forth, the very stones could not knocke him so hard, as his praier knockt heauen gate, whē as he said, Lord Iesus let me in, Lord Iesus receiue my spirit. Therefore the gate was *opened* vnto him. He saw the heauen opened, and Iesus standing at the right hand of God, where he within a while after, should sit himselfe. So was it *opened* to king^b Dauid. He knockt very imperiously, not like a petitioner, but like a commander. Lift vp your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift vp ye euerlasting dores, that the King of glorie may come in. Open vnto me the gate of the righteous, that I may enter in and praise the Lord. And when the gate was *opened*, as he was entring in, he pointed to it and said, This is the gate of the righteous, the iust shall enter into it. So was it *opened* to S. Paul. ^c He was cast downe

of praier.

downe into the very lowest dungeon. All the chaines of darknes, and euen hell it selfe, could not haue held him faster, then that dungeon did. Yet at midnight, when he praied & knockt, suddenly all the prison dores flew open, yea all the dores of heauen likewise stood open, and that which is most maruelous of all, they stood so wide open, that not onely S. Paul himselfe went in, but also Stephanas the iayler, and his whole houshold, whome he at that time conuerted and baptized, did enter in with him. So that all, all eternall things are ours, and nothing, nothing can preuaile against vs, if we knocke as we ought. Not the brasen gates of hell, to shut vs in, nor the golden gates of heauen, to shut vs out. For Christ hath said here; Knocke, and it shall be opened vnto you. Thus much for the second part, what God for our praier will performe to vs in these words, *And it shall be given you, and you shall find, and it shall be opened*

ned vnto you.

Now then my deere brethren, giue me leaue, I beseech you, to speake vnto you, me I say, that am the seruant of God, and your seruant for God, as Naman the Syrians seruants said vnto him. Father, say they, if the prophet had commaunded thee a great thing, wouldst thou not haue done it? how much more then, when he saith vnto thee, Wash, and be cleane? Brethren, say I, if he that is more then a prophet, had commanded you a great thing, would you not haue done it? how much more then when he saith vnto you. Wash, and be cleane, Aske, and it shall be giuen you? He desires to be desired. And he ha's not his owne will, except we haue ours. But we may haue what we will for asking. God doeth aske no more of vs, but only that we would vouchsafe to aske him. Doe no more, saies he, but aske, and haue; Doe no more, but seeke,

of praier.

seeke, and finde: Doe no more, but knocke, and enter in. O how easily, & yet howe powerfully doeth praier worke! It ouercommeth all beastes.

The Leuiathan, the strength of all Gods creatures, was so subdued by praier, that whereas otherwise he might haue beene a gulfe to swallowe vp Ionas quicke, and for euer to deuoure him, he became a shippe to saue him. It ouercommeth all men.

Jacob giueth Ioseph one portion aboue his brethren, which he got of the Amorites, by his sword and by his bowe. But the Chaldee Paraphrast, translates it, *By my praier, and by my supplication.* Which translation prooueth, that praier is the sword, and supplication is the bowe of a Christian, wherewith he subdueth all his enemies. It ouercommeth the deuill himselfe. Praier and fasting, are the cheifest meanes to cast him out. If we resist him by praier, he will flie from vs. Yea the most silly beast in all the for-

rest, is not so much affrighted and amazed, when a lyon roareth, as this cowardly beast the deuill is daunted and terrified, when a Christian prayeth. What shall I say more? It ouercommeth him that cannot be overcome, making the virgins son stoupe downe, and condescend vnto vs. I pray thee let me goe, saies he, to one that wrestled with him all the night long by praier. If thou wilt be a suter to God, God will be a suter to thee. If thou wilt pray vnto God, God will pray vnto thee. I pray thee, saies he, let me goe. But what doeth Israel answer? I will not let thee goe, except thou blesse me. No will? It is not be-like now as God will, but as man will. God is taken captiue by praier, and become a prisoner to man, and stands at his curtesie, who saies, I will not let thee goe, except thou blesse me. And that which is more then all this, if more may be, praier ouercommeth God, not onely beeing well pleased,

of praier.

as he was with Israel, when any child may deale with him, but also beeing displeased, as he was with the Israelites, when no man may come neere him; when his wrath burneth as fire; when he thunders from heauen; and teares the clouds in peeces; & cleaues the rockes asunder; and shakes sand and sea together; and makes the whole earth in a trembling fitte of feare, flie away from him. Yet if some Moses doe but stand vp in the gap and pray, all this omnipotent power, shall come to nothing; god shall not be able, though he be neuer so angrie, to enter vpon the breach, but praier shall haue the victorie, & get the conquest of him. Wherefore beloued, once againe I say, let vs alwaies intrench our selues within this inuincible bulwark of praier. Our whole life alas, as we haue made it by sinne, is most miserable. There is no man aliue, if he had knowne before he was borne, what miseries would haue befallen him in this

this life, but would haue wished, I warrant you, with all his heart, that that which was the wombe of his birth, had bin the tombe for his buriall. But in all the calamities of this life, our onely comfort is praier. In all the afflictions of this life, our onely fortresse is praier. Praier, whereby we are oftentimes in spirit with the Apostle, rapt vp into the third heauen,, where we, that are otherwise but wormes, walke with the angels, and euen continually talke with God. Hence it is that holy men and women in former time, could neuer haue enough of this exercise. Nazianzen in his Epitaph for his sister Gorgonia writeth, that shee was so giuen to praier, that her knees seemed to cleaue to the earth, & to growe to the very ground, by reason of continuance in praier. Gregorie in his Dialogues writeth, that his aunt Trasilabeing dead, was found to haue her elbowes as hard as horne. Which hardnes she got by leaning to a deske.

et tunc yma-
ra tu id est
reuerentia
ipsa.

of praier.

~~III~~

a deske, at which she vsed to pray. Eusebius in his historie writeth that Iames the brother of our Lord, had knees as hard as cammells knees, benumbed & bereiued of all sense and feeling, by reason of continuall kneeling in prayer. Hierom in the life of Paul the Eremitte, writeth, that he was found dead, kneeling vpon his knees, holding vp his hands, lifting vp his eyes. So that the very dead corps seemed yet to liue and by a kind of religious gesture to pray still vnto God. O how happie and how blessed, was that soule without the body, when as that bodie without the soule was so deuout! O that we may be, that we may be likewise, so happy and so blessed as this holy man was, that we may depart hence, in such sort as he did, that is in such sort as Christ did, who died in prayer, saying *Father into thy bandes I commend my spirit*, that our lord when he cometh, may find vs so doing, that when we shall lie vpon
our

Etiam cada-
uer mortui of-
ficio gesto
precabatur.

our death bed, gasping for breath, readie to giue vp the ghost, then the precious soule of euerie one of vs, redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, may passe away in a prayer, in a secret and sweet prayer, may passe I say, out of Adam's body, into Abram's bosome; Through the tender mercies of Iesus Christ, to whom with the father and the holy ghost, be all honour and glorie, power and praise, dignitie and dominion, now & euermore. Amen.

Finis.